
LESSON 4

THEATER LOGISTICS

The more I see of war, the more I realize how it all depends on administration and transportation... It takes little skill or imagination to see where you would like your army to be and when; it takes much more knowledge and hard work to know where you can place your forces and whether you can maintain them there.

--General A. P. C. Wavell, quoted in Martin Van Creveld's *"Supplying War, Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton"*

Introduction

Purpose	This lesson discusses wThe relationship between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of logistics wThe elements of a theater logistics system and how they are integrated into the theater logistics concept wHow joint warfighting capabilities are supported by joint force command relationships and directive authority for logistics
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Why Study Theater Logistics?	Logistic capabilities ultimately see operational limits. Logistics must be an integral part of all planning processes for any operation to succeed.
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Relationship to Other Instruction	This lesson draws on strategical and operational logistics issues analyzed during the <i>Strategic Level of War</i> (8802) and <i>Operational Level of War</i> (8803) courses.
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Study Time	This lesson, including the issues for consideration, requires about 2 hours of study.
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Educational Objectives

Levels of Logistics	Comprehend the relationship between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of logistics. [JPME Area 3(e)]
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Elements of a Theater Logistics System	Comprehend the elements of a theater logistics system and how they are integrated into the theater logistics concept. [JPME Area 1(d)]
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Command Relationships	Comprehend how joint force command relationships and directive authority for logistics support joint warfighting capabilities. [JPME Area 1(d)]
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JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	1/d/1.0 3/e/1.0
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Discussion

Theater Logistics

Theater logistics are the application of logistics resources to generate and support theater combat power. Theater or operational logistics encompasses the total scope of activity required to form, equip, sustain, move, engage, disengage, and disestablish military forces. It should be apparent from previous study that theater logistics provides the resources for combat service support (CSS) functions at the tactical level of war.

Theater Logistics Planning

As the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commander plans for and prosecutes a single battle, it will be the logistics staff (J/G-4) that develops a theater logistics concept supporting the theater concept of operations and designs and manages the theater logistics system. They will work closely with the operations staff to ensure logistics and operational capabilities are fully integrated across the theater, and resources from CONUS, intermediate staging bases, and other out-of-theater locations are identified, transported, and distributed to combat forces.

Theater Logistics Functions

To be effective, logistics has to function properly at every level. The individual front-line rifleman has to get the ammunition and other supplies when and where he needs them, otherwise he cannot complete his mission. A bottleneck or breakdown anywhere in the system, at the strategic, operational, or tactical level, will inevitably result in failure.

At the theater level, logistic support has a profound influence on what commanders can and cannot do. Like any logistic function, it has to be flexible and responsive. It needs to support the operational forces in different options while working within the limits of available resources. Operational plans must also be integrated into the logistics capabilities.

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Discussion, Continued

Potential Problems with Theater Logistics

In theory, everything in war is simple. Logistics simply involves providing operational forces with their basic materiel needs at the time and place they need them. In practice, this can be a very challenging task, especially at the theater level. At this high level, time, distance, requirements, and options, all make planning and implementation difficult. More lead-time is necessary to build logistic capabilities at this level.

Time is a major issue, since logistic capabilities have to be in place before anything else can happen. Providing theater level logistics can be difficult because it generally involves overcoming great distances and geographical obstacles.

Logistics Support

During World War II, logistically supporting the China/Burma Theater involved shipping materiel halfway around the world and then flying it over the Himalayan Mountains. Logistic requirements at the theater level can be daunting, both in terms of amounts and types of materiel. The logistics support will have to provide the full spectrum of equipment, fuels, ammunition, food, transportation maintenance, spare parts, and other materiel essential to maintaining full combat potential. This task is made that much more difficult when multinational operations are involved since each force will likely have subtly different requirements.

Required Readings

Joint Pub Readings

Joint Pub 4-0, *Doctrine for Logistic Support of Joint Operations*: pp. I-1 through I-13, II-1 through II-9. Find this in the *Joint Pub Readings*, Vol. III, (8800), pp. 951 to 972. This publication covers authorities, responsibilities, and general principles for logistic operations. Logistic planning is important enough for all levels to be integrated into joint operation plan annexes. The combatant commander must have a logistic concept that considers geography, transportation, and logistics capability, as well as overall theater requirements. Consider, logistics can be a force multiplier to extend operational reach. Review only.

A briefing is included focusing on the importance of theater logistics for the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF).

MCWP 0.1-1, *Componency*

MCWP 0.1-1, *Componency* (Coordinating Draft), pp. 26 and 27, "The Marine Component and the MAGTF" comparing the roles and functions of the Marine component commander and the MAGTF commander, and "The MLC and the MAGTF" regarding logistics support considerations. Review only.

For Further Study

Supplemental Readings

The readings listed are **not** required. They are provided as recommended sources of additional information on lesson topics that may interest you. They will increase your knowledge and augment your understanding of this lesson.

WFMFM 4, *Combat Service Support*.

WFMFM 4-1, *Combat Service Support Operations*.

Issues For Consideration

Levels of Logistics Support

What are the levels of logistics support and what command levels are responsible for each?

Theater Logistics

What are the key elements of a theater logistics system?

Directive Authority

What is "directive authority for logistics matters," and what does that mean to the Marine component of a unified command?
